

Throwing A Curve

Coming home from Roy's team picture, we stop
to show off the brand-new uniform – Blue
Jays stenciled on the front, stockings, the works.
Out of mischief or shyness he's at the edge
of the room as you sit in your chair slowly
dying, balder than me for once in your life,
shedding more than any of your cats has done.

Time to break out one of Uncle Perry's hats,
a Stetson like the one he wore when watching
me playing with Donnie, graduation trip,
back East, so long ago. Just a game of catch,
early June, flowers blooming in a cool
Boston summer. I'd never pitched, an outfielder
by nature, on the edge of things, when Donnie
asked, could I show him. Its sweet break surprised

us both. Perry smiled, a moment of
approval that's stuck with me these twenty-
five years. Funny how tossing a ball to someone
else can mean so much, a warm-up exercise
kids want to get over with so they can hit,
be the runner, play third base. You tried it
once, said I threw too hard, shook your hand
and headed back indoors. Work often kept

you from my games, trying to make it up
in other ways, collecting stamps, reading
Sherlock Holmes, watching Jo-Jo White play ball,
ways of being together I've passed along
to Roy – who's pirouetting now to show us how
the uniform looks all round. Perry gone
long ago, not long after watching us play,
Donnie gone too – car accident, you said.

Just a game of catch, to share or not
to share, cousins throwing on the fringe
of a garden, someone older looking on,
an ordinary curve surprising them by its
sudden change in path, spinning into a glove
or dropping on the lawn, making its own
arc from hand to hand, waving goodbye.

Philip Wedge